

The National Network of Fusion Centers: Assessing Preparedness and Information Sharing

Posted by Mike Sena, President of the National Fusion Center Association on Friday, June 22, 2012

Mike Sena is the President of the [National Fusion Center Association \(NFCA\)](#)^[1], which represents the interests of the national network of fusion centers, the Deputy Director of the [Northern California Regional Intelligence Center](#)^[2], and a Commander with the California Department of Justice ? Bureau of Investigation.

Earlier this month, I testified before the [House Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications](#) ^[3] on behalf of the [National Fusion Center Association \(NFCA\)](#) ^[1]. The national network of fusion centers has played a major role in transforming the way that federal, state, local, and tribal governments share intelligence information, and as I told the Subcommittee, it is clear to those of us on the front lines that intelligence and information sharing has improved dramatically since 9/11.

Fusion Centers and Information Sharing

Fusion centers analyze national threat information in a local context, disseminate relevant and actionable information to state and local decision makers, and pass critical state and local information up to federal partners in the intelligence community. Fusion centers collaborate with many agencies and organizations to successfully accomplish this mission, including the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Forces, the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Investigative Support Centers, the Regional Information Sharing System centers, major city and major county intelligence centers, the Nationwide SAR Initiative, and the FBI Field Intelligence Groups. Importantly, all of this is done while protecting the privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties of American citizens.

Strong leadership from the DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis, the Office of the Program Manager of the Information Sharing Environment, the Bureau of Justice Assistance at the Department of Justice, the Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting Initiative's Program Management Office, and the FBI have strengthened governance structures that have lowered or removed barriers between federal, state, local, and tribal information sharing.

Moving Forward

There is good reason to pat ourselves on the back; but there is much to do, and there is also real reason for concern. As the dramatic decline in federal grant funds begins to take effect at the end-user level this year, we will struggle to maintain the momentum that has developed over the past decade. Fusion centers in some states that rely heavily on federal grant dollars to support operations will likely lose significant numbers of analytical personnel, and some may cease operations altogether.

I told the Subcommittee that going forward, we at the NFCA believe that DHS preparedness grants should

emphasize the intelligence and information sharing element of our national preparedness. Information sharing, through a properly funded national network of fusion centers, should be prioritized to continue building and sustaining prevention and protection capabilities.

Read [Mike Sena's full testimony to the House Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications](#) ^[4], learn more about the [National Fusion Center Association](#) ^[1], and share your thoughts in the comments below.

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